



Frederic Edwin Church, *Twilight in the Wilderness* (1860)

## **HIST2111 Syllabus**

Survey of United States History I, Sections A&SF, 3 Credits

Summer 2026

### **Instructor Information**

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**Instructor: Dr. Christopher Lawton**

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### **General Course Information**

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#### **Description**

This is a course about an early America bathed not in the hazy soft light of folklore and imagined memory, but confronted head-on in its ambitious, boisterous, complex, contentious, messy, noisy, violent, fully human and full-bodied act of becoming. It is a course about arguments and uprisings, rebellions and revolutions, stunning successes and heartbreaking failures.

This semester we will explore the collisions and chaos of colonial settlement, multiple struggles for independence, and the improbable rise of a new nation founded on the proposition, radical for its time, that “all men are created equal.” Together we will try to understand the American past through examinations of art, class, culture, gender, geography, politics, race, and technology. We will also investigate how the grand ideals but unequal outcomes of the first American Revolution set the stage for a second in the Civil War and Reconstruction.

## Course Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this course, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge of major cultural, economic, intellectual, political, and social developments in American history from beginnings of colonization through the Civil War and Reconstruction.
- Analyze and explain multiple causes of complex events using conflicting sources.
- Generate substantive, open-ended questions about the past and develop research strategies to answer them.
- Develop and apply historical methods for collecting, sifting, organizing, questioning, synthesizing, interpreting, and contextualizing a diverse array of complex material.

## Required Course Materials

This course will be online and asynchronous. Lecture videos, project instructions, and required readings can be accessed through the “modules” tab in Canvas. Readings can also be accessed through our course Canvas Reading List. Titles are listed below; please see the course calendar for additional details.

- (excerpts from) John Smith, *The Generall Historie of Virginia* (1624)
- John Winthrop, “Model of Christian Charity” (1630)
- Nathaniel Bacon, “Declaration of the People” (1676)
- (excerpts from) Benjamin Franklin, *Autobiography* (1791)
- (excerpts from) Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* (1776)
- Thomas Jefferson et al., *Declaration of Independence* (1776)
- “Publius,” *Federalist 51* (1788)
- U.S. Constitution (1787) and Bill of Rights (1791)
- (excerpts from) George Washington, “Farewell Address” (1796)
- (excerpts from) Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature* (1836)
- Thomas Cole, “Essay on American Scenery” (1836)
- (excerpts from) Henry David Thoreau, “Civil Disobedience” (1849) and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, et. al., *Declaration of Sentiments* (1848)
- William Lloyd Garrison, “Speech . . . relating to the Execution of John Brown,” *The Liberator* (1859)
- (excerpt from) Whitman, “I Celebrate Myself,” *Leaves of Grass* (1855)

Additional, shorter texts (excerpts from acts, charters, legislation, poems, proclamations, publications, sermons, and speeches, etc.) will be available in the videos for our course. You will not need to write responses to texts in videos, but should be prepared to answer questions about them on exams.

## Grading Policy

Students can earn up to 420 points this semester. Final grades are based on the number of points earned divided by 420 [A: 90%+, B: 80-90%, C:70-80%, D:60-70%]. Points may be earned as follows.

Exams [= 294 pts]

- Exam #1: 55pts
- Exam #2: 55pts
- Exam #3: 55pts
- Exam #4: 55pts
- Exam #5 (final): 74pts

Projects [= 60 pts]

- Transatlantic Trade Project: 20pts
- Internal Trade/GA Newspapers Project: 20pts
- Seen/Unseen Documents Project: 20pts

Reading Responses for 14 Primary Sources [= 66 pts]

- Responses to first nine documents (4pts each): 36pts
- Responses to last five documents (6pts each): 30pts

## Description of Graded Components

### *Exams*

There will be five exams, each over the material covered that week. All will consist of multiple-choice and short answer or essay questions drawn from lectures and readings. The final (exam #5) will also contain one or more cumulative essay questions.

Exams will be taken in Canvas using Honorlock, which will record you, your screen, and your surroundings. You must show your *\*entire\** surrounding area on Honorlock (including all four walls and all surfaces) before beginning an exam.

All exams will be open notebook but limited in time. You may have and reference a printed paper copy of your notes while taking an exam, but absolutely nothing else. To be clear, this means no technology other than the laptop you use to take the test and no open windows/documents/tabs other than Canvas and Honorlock through Chrome. You may not have near you or use a phone, speaker, headphones, etc. You may not use AI.

Please remember that it is a violation of the Georgia Tech Honor Code (see below) to submit work that is not your own.

### *Readings/Discussion Posts*

Thoughtful and precise analysis of the past requires that we give past generations the space and time to speak for themselves. This semester, we will do this by reading several primary source documents for each module (approx. 25-40 pages of reading per week) and writing a response to each. Details are listed on the course calendar and specific instructions are available through our Canvas “discussions” tab. Please take notes on all assigned readings and be prepared to discuss them on exams.

In advance of each due date/class discussion, please

- plan adequate time to read, make brief notes about, and thoughtfully consider the material,
- write and upload a 250–600-word Canvas discussion post (varies by assignment) citing and analyzing what you think are the most interesting/important specific points in the text and why,
- and, after posting your own paragraphs, please write a specific and thoughtful paragraph-length reply to the post of at least one other student.

### *Projects*

Over the course of this short summer session, you will work on three small projects that ask you to investigate and respond to primary source materials. Instructions for each will be posted in modules, as well as on the “assignments” tab. Please remember that it is a violation of the Georgia Tech Honor Code (see below) to submit work that is not your own.

## **Course Policies**

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### **Attendance and/or Participation**

This online asynchronous course will allow you to work through each module at your own pace. Each module will open on a Monday morning and all parts (videos, responses, projects, and exams) must be completed by the following Sunday night. Because the course lasts only five short weeks, please familiarize yourself with and rigorously adhere to the details listed on the course calendar.

### **Academic Integrity**

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. Review [Georgia Tech’s Honor Code](#) and the student [Code of Conduct](#).

Please keep in mind that we are bound by and agree to uphold the Georgia Tech Honor Code at all times. No exceptions. This means that you:

- must take exams entirely on your own,
- will not communicate with anyone at all during the open exam window, and will not make images of or in any way record or share exam questions,
- may not possess, verbally share information about, or use anyone else’s tests, research projects, written responses, or other graded coursework,
- may not include in any assignment anything that was not written directly by you without proper citation.

All individual work you submit should be your own. You may not include in any assignment anything that was not written directly by you without proper citation. This means you are prohibited from using AI in any and all work that you submit, as AI pulls together the writings and research of others without credit or citation.

Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarism on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, who will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations.

### **Core IMPACTS**

[Core IMPACTS](#) is the University System of Georgia’s General Education curriculum.

*This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Social Sciences area*

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help master course content, and support students’ broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:

- How do I understand human experiences and connections?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcome:

- Students will effectively analyze the complexity of human behavior, and how historical, economic, political, social, or geographic relationships develop, persist, or change.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Intercultural Competence
- Perspective-Taking
- Persuasion

*This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Citizenship area*

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:

- How do I prepare for my responsibilities as an engaged citizen?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcome:

- Students will demonstrate knowledge of the history of the United States, the history of Georgia, and the provisions and principles of the United States Constitution and the Constitution of Georgia.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Critical Thinking
- Intercultural Competence
- Persuasion

### **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, [contact the Office of Disability Services](#) (404-894-2563) as soon as possible to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me as soon as possible in order to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

### **Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement**

At Georgia Tech, we believe that it is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. [The Student-Faculty Expectations](#) articulate some basic expectations that you can have of me and that I have of you. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek. Therefore, I encourage you to remain committed to the ideals of Georgia Tech while in this class.